

B is for Bullying by Elillierose

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Summary:

Steve hasn't had the easiest time at Hawkins High since Billy came to town. Just a short fic of Steve needing to take a trip to the nurse's office after a basketball 'mishap'.

B is for Bullying

Author's Note:

Here it is, the second installment of Steve's Alphabet Soup~ So glad people enjoyed the first and want more. >:D

Ears ringing, Steve rolled over to his side, trying to curl in on himself.

Wait...

Roll over?

He didn't even remember lying down. In fact... a good chunk of his memory seemed to have been missing. Like the last few minutes or so... All he knew was that his head was throbbing and the murmuring echoing around him wasn't helping matters any. That was another thing that prodded at his confusion, who was that he was hearing. There were a few of them.

His forehead scrunched from thinking, or was it due to the consistent throbbing through his skull. Maybe even both. Then there were hands on him, on his shoulders.

"Hmm?" he slurred, trying to crack an eye open, but the light pierced right through to his brain, searing it from the inside out. He squeezed his eye back shut and turned his head against a fake wooden floor. A slick one...

That was right ... he was at school. In gym - basketball.

Did he fall?

No, that wasn't quite right. He vaguely recalled tripping over something, falling and then pain and nothing. Well, that explained the constant pounding through his head. One hand clumsily found the lump on his head. His fingers tapped along it, running over something ...

Steve swallowed thickly, and finally, some of his senses were starting

to return.

“-ou a-right?”

He tried once more to take a peek at his surroundings, and managed to make out a few blurry shapes hovering over him. All of them kept their distance. As if they were afraid to touch him. He struggled to get any of them to clear up enough to recognize them. Only one ... just one single person came into focus enough to make out.

“B’lly?” he mumbled, wincing as his own voice echoed through his head.

Next thing he knew, he was moving, but it wasn’t on his own. He wasn’t sure he could even if he wanted to.

“I’ll take’em to the nurse,” said whoever it was hefting him up. It took his mind a little too long to realize it was Billy talking as well.

For a split moment, panic set in and Steve tried to pull away. Why him? “No...” he muttered with a wince. Either he didn’t struggle very hard or Billy really was that much stronger than him because he didn’t make it anywhere. He tried again, able to tear himself away this time. Steve snatched his arm loose and took a single step before stumbling with a sharp gasp. He closed his eyes tight, mentally preparing himself for the collision with the floor. A few seconds passed and nothing.

“Harrington, I’d calm down if I were you. You don’t want to slip and knock yourself out again, do you?” Billy hefted him back up, pulling one of Steve’s arms tightly around his shoulders.

Then it started to come back to him in bits and pieces. They were having a match and ...

“You...” Steve breathed out with a small flinch. “You trip-”

“Come on, pretty boy,” Billy interrupted, practically dragging the teen draped over his shoulders. “Let’s get that head of yours checked out.” It sounded all fine and dandy on the outside, but the slight twitch at the corner of his mouth had properly working parts of Steve’s brain firing off all the alarm bells.

Steve had little choice but to stagger along or be literally dragged behind the larger teen. Sure, Billy wasn't known for his empathy, but this was a little over the top, even for him. Everything continued to warp around Steve as they walked, and every step he feared he'd trip over his own feet if he stopped manually thinking about how to do it for even a second.

Luckily, or unluckily, he had Billy there to tug him along every time he faltered.

"What're you doin'?" Steve slurred, willing himself to walk a little bit more on his own. It wasn't much, but he needed at least a little bit of pride back. "S'not like you care..."

He could feel Billy shrug more than see it. "Just trying to be a good samaritan, Harrington." He pulled Steve a little higher when he began to slip. "And it gives us some time alone to talk." Steve let a small whimper escape as the hold around him tightened.

"Wha'bout?" Steve ground out, cutting his eyes over.

Billy shrugged again. "About our individual standing here, Mister King." He accentuated it by pulling Steve up again, eliciting a gasp as his head jostled. Part of him couldn't help but wonder why their coach was even allowing this. Surely he knew how serious head injuries were and he was all right with him walking away? Well, half walking away? Even with his head only half working, he knew this was a terrible idea.

Then again, his coach had been the type to tell people to 'walk off' leg injuries. So he shouldn't be too surprised. All he could do was grit his teeth and try to bear with it.

"Wha'about it?" Steve asked, straightening up once more. It was a little late for not showing weakness in front of Billy, but dammit if he wasn't still going to try. "What? You wanna ... overthrow th'king or somethin'?" He rolled his eyes, regretting it instantly when his head spun as well with the action.

Billy cringed at the thought. "Don't think so highly of yourself. I don't want your high and mighty throne."

Steve's whole head swam as his position suddenly shifted and he was spun around, back being shoved to the wall. If it weren't for the strong hands on his shoulders, he'd be on that floor in a heap. Billy's face was a mere few inches from his. Steve could smell the smoke on his breath.

"I just love seeing the mighty fall."

Steve barely got his mouth open in question before a fist met his ribs, causing him to double over with a short wheeze. Black specks burst through his vision. He slid only about a foot and Billy grabbed the collar of his shirt and yanked him back up, holding him in place.

"You have any idea how annoying it is? Always being looked down on?" He used his other hand to grip Steve's chin, turning it and forcing him to look into Billy's eyes. Then he leaned in, hand shaking. "Do you?"

Steve looked the larger teen in the eyes for a moment. "C'n't imagine," he said tightly, still fighting against the haze in his vision. He took a deep, shaky breath. "B't I think ... I th'nk you 'ave some serious issues." Steve thrust his head forward. Well, mostly, part of it was due to him losing the battle of having to hold it upright for so long.

He heard, as well as felt, the crack from the blow. And a second later, the hold on him was released, as was the only thing holding him up. Everything blurred into an endless blob of color as he dropped - hard. Through the new ringing, Billy's muffled swears could be heard.

"Y're f'ckin' dead..." Billy's voice wavered in and out. Steve pushed himself up, propped up slightly on his hands, but his arms were trembling too much to do any more than that. All he could do was half lie there and wait for the fists that were sure to come. Steve closed his eyes, waiting for the incoming blows...

"What's going on out her- Harrington?"

Steve risked opening an eye and peered towards the voice.

"R'llins..." he slurred, squinting at the out of focus figure. Every time he blinked, he was sure the teacher teleported closer.

The man stopped a few feet away and turned his attention to Billy instead, who stood there, one hand over his bleeding nose. "Hargrove ... what's going on here?"

Billy glanced between the two, jaw tense. "Steve here had a fall during a game of basketball," he said with a bit too much precision. "I was merely escorting him to the nurse. But I think the idio- he might be concussed and got a little confused. Lashed out." He chuckled with a hint of bitterness and circled a finger around his face. "So, we should be on our way." He took a single step before his path was blocked by an arm.

"That's quite alright, Hargrove. You head back to class, I can take over from here." Billy stood there for a second, as if about to protest. His eyes lingered a bit longer on Steve before he spun on the ball of his foot and began his saunter. Even through fog, Steve could tell just how stiff his movements were.

Soon enough, his line of sight was severed as Rollins crouched, leaning in close enough to come into focus. "Steve, can you hear me?"

The teen nodded. He could, not well, but he could make out enough words to fill in the blanks. The English teacher placed a hand on Steve's cheek and slowly lifted his head, thumb carefully exploring along his hairline until he felt it. A small sigh was released with the discovery.

"Think you can stand on your own?"

Again, Steve nodded. Though, he was positive that was out of reflex, for he wasn't sure exactly how plausible that was. His limbs were less than responsive. He tried nonetheless. He managed to get somewhat sitting and already had to blink against the dizziness.

"Easy does it," Rollins said softly, one hand firmly on the teen's upper arm to keep him from falling right back down. "I'm gonna help you stand, all right? I just need you to work with me here." It was a

process, but they were somehow able to get Steve on his feet. He was given a few seconds to adjust to the new position. "Need a second?"

"Jus" Steve swallowed hard. "Jus' a min'te."

Rollins didn't miss the way Steve leaned slightly, one hand hovering over the ribs on his left side. He never actually touched the area, though. He simply let his hand fall back to his side. Taking a slow breath, the teen nodded with a confirming hum. "M'good. M'ready."

Rollins returned the gesture, and slowly, they took their first step, not taking the second until he was sure Steve was ready. And that's how they continued on: one slow step at a time with the occasional break.

"We're almost there," he assured, taking more of the teen's weight on his shoulders by the minute. By the time they reached the door, Steve was nearly panting with a thin sheen over his face. Keeping his eyes on Steve, Rollins knocked a couple times. In less than five seconds, the door opened, and a stout, middle aged woman stood, staring with pinched brows at Rollin's charge.

"What in God's name happened here?" she asked, stepping aside and waving the two of them in.

Rollins' own brows rose. "A 'fall' during P.E. Or so I'm told." He walked Steve over to the bed where he slowly lowered him to sit. He instantly lurched to the side and curled up with a soft whimper. Truthfully, he was just thankful none of his friends had to hear him make such a sound.

"Steve, honey," the nurse started, taking a seat next to him. "I'm sorry, but I'm gonna need you ta sit up for me for just a little while, ok? Think you can do that for me, hon?"

At first, there was no answer, then a low groan. As steadily as he could, Steve did as he was asked and propped himself up on an elbow. One click of the tongue from the nurse, and he sat up a little more until he could prop himself up against the back wall.

"There we go, that's better. Just need to be able to get a better look at ya is all." She scanned over his face, looking mostly at his eyes and

the lack of focus they bore. “Hon, can you tell me what exactly happened?” Though, with the bruise already forming on his temple, she hardly needed much of an explanation.

“Fell...” Steve huffed out, glancing at the woman and then away in the next second.

She paused and narrowed her eyes. “You fell?”

The teen nodded and shifted, letting a small hiss slip when his bruised ribs moved. One arm wrapped around himself and he found himself dropping his gaze.

The nurse sighed and clicked her tongue. “Lemme have a look, hon.” She twirled her finger, urging him to do as she requested. All the while, Rollins stayed stationed at the door, watching from the side. For a little while, Steve didn’t move, he found himself unable to. And slowly, he shook his head.

“It’s nothing,” he nearly whispered. “Jus’sore from the...” he trailed off and pointed to the developing bruise on his head. He tried to finish it off with an awkward laugh, but it fell short from his flinch.

“Steve... it’s all right,” she assured. “Anything that goes on in here doesn’t leave here. I’m just here to help and I just want to make sure everything is fine.”

His eyes slowly flicked from one to the other. Both were watching him attentively. His heart thrummed a bit faster with every second their attention was on him. Then, he nodded. It was a small motion, almost a twitch. Holding his breath, both from anticipation as well as dull pain, he lifted the hem of his t-shirt. Not even an inch up and an old bruise peaked from below the fabric. He continued, pulling it off the rest of the way and dropped it to the floor.

Steve glanced down as well. He saw them every day, but in this lightning ... well, it made it look a few degrees worse than what he would consider it. His torso was adorned in bruises, some fresher than others, but all telling of something a little more than accidental.

“Are all those from ‘falls’ as well?” Rollins asked with a raised brow.

Steve remained quiet, lips pressed.

The nurse clicked her tongue once more and turned her eyes back to his head where she carried on with her initial inspection. She prodded the area as softly as she could, earning a few hisses from the teen. At least there was no open wound. He'd have a bit of a headache for a while, but she doubted there would be anything beyond that.

Finished with her look over, she stepped away to fetch an ice pack. When she returned and handed it to Steve, she took a seat on the side of the bed.

And took a deep breath.

"Steve, I need to ask you something, and I need you to be honest." He couldn't help but notice how her eyes scanned down him and he already knew where she was going before she spoke. "Those bruises, I've seen it numerous times in this line of work. Tell the truth ... do your parents hit yo-"

"No!" Steve nearly snapped. "No," he repeated softer. "They'd have to be around to do that."

Now it was her turn to press her lips together. "Bruises like that don't just happen by accident. How did you get them?" He didn't answer, but it was clear enough. There was only one other option as far as she was concerned. "Is it another student?" Again, he didn't have to answer. The tensing of his shoulders was plain as day. "Who is it?"

Steve gave a one-sided shrug. "No one. Basketball just ... gets rough." It wasn't a complete lie. It was just a little *more* rough ever since a certain someone moved into town. "That's all there is to it." He pressed the ice back against his temple with a cringe.

"You know you can tell me, right?" She glanced down to the most recent of the marks, the one across his ribs. It was fresh, definitely happened the same day. And if she had to guess, she would say around the same time as the head injury.

Steve shook his head, though, and leaned back with a sigh. "Won't

make a difference,” he muttered, draping his arm back around his ribs. “Does’n matter, anyway. He’s not gonna st’p.” He took a shuddering breath and winced against the continuous throbs through his skull. “B’sides, I’ve got’t under control.”

She huffed a breath and got to her feet. “Can you at least answer me this: whoever it is, did they cause the head mishap as well?”

At this, Steve nodded.

“Billy?”

The teen’s eyes snapped open and right to Rollins. “Who told you that?”

The teacher smirked. “It’s not that subtle. And after that stunt in the hall, I don’t pin you as the type to lash out like that without reason. It’s like Rita said, you can tell us, we won’t tell anyone unless you’re fine with it. But you can’t just keep quiet about it if it’s as big a problem as it appears to be. And as it looks from my standpoint, this has been going on for at least weeks.”

“A m’nth,” Steve corrected.

Rollins nodded with a hum. “A month. Why haven’t you told anyone about this?”

Steve shrugged again. “L’ke I said. Wouldn’t matter.” He sat up a little straighter. “He’d jus’find another punching bag.” He let out a slow breath. “That’s th’kind of person h’is.” And it was easier this way. But he kept that part to himself. Billy had connections to certain people; certain people he wished to remain unharmed if he could help it. If that meant toughing through a little bullying, then he could handle it. He’d have to. “I c’n take care of’t,” he finally added after a short moment of silence.

Rollins could only shake his head and fold his arms. “You’re a damn stubborn one. I’m a man of my word, though. I won’t say anything unless I have your approval. But, if things get out of hand like today ... I will not hesitate. You’re lucky it’s just a bump on the head and a headache; it could have been so much worse. You realize that, don’t

you?”

“Yeah...” It was true. With a fall as hard as the one he took, he was surprised that’s all that was wrong. He touched tentative fingers to his head. “Don’worry, I won’t let’t.” Slowly, he sank back down into the bed. He wasn’t sure if it was the head injury or the month’s worth of beatings, but exhaustion was catching up to him and it was growing increasingly difficult to keep his eyes open.

Rita sauntered back over to her desk and took a seat. “Go ahead and get some rest, hon, I’ll inform...” she flipped through her files for a moment ... “Mr. Mills.” She spun her chair around to face the teen. “So, no need to worry about missing next period. And once you wake up, I suggest going home for the day. Maybe have someone go with you just to be on the safe side.”

Steve just nodded, whether or not he heard everything or not was a different story. He was drifting off before she was finished talking. Deep down, he knew it wouldn’t do any good whether he took their advice or not, he wasn’t going to do anything about it. He didn’t plan to. It’s going to be like it has all this time, he was going to endure it so others wouldn’t have to.